The Issue:
In 2010, two of the Club’s lady members inquired about junior membership for their daughters. During their investigations, it became clear that while the Club has always welcomed and encouraged junior players – the emphasis and support offered was directed towards a small minority of elite young players. Additionally, the Club offered no organised activities for children.

The Solution:
These two mothers spearheaded the implementation of the Club’s current and very successful programme, which caters for both boys and girls.

In November 2010, a full audit of Junior Policy and Procedures was carried out and formal policies were drawn up and adopted by the Council. This gave the Club the template to move forward with its juniors program and inform existing members of Best Practice & Safe Guarding Guidelines.

In February 2011, the ladies joined forces with the Club’s Professional and devised a programme of regular activities to meet the needs of the existing junior members. These included a regular coaching session from the Club’s Professional, Keith O’Neill, Skills Challenge practice sessions and junior competitions.

Two months later, they initiated a junior membership drive. Fliers and posters were distributed to all local schools. Parents of local children were invited to attend an open day at which Junior Golf was portrayed as a fun all-inclusive sport and lots of games and activities took place.

Over summer 2011, around fifty children participated in various activities on Saturday mornings. Almost all of these took part in group coaching sessions with the Pro. To meet the adult supervision requirements, parents were encouraged to support the Programme as volunteers or supervisors during these sessions, and a rota was implemented.

Enniscrone Golf Club is a traditional Irish link course in County Sligo. Enniscrone offers 27 holes of challenging golf and can regularly be found in lists of Ireland’s top courses.

Junior membership has always been encouraged in Enniscrone Golf Club and in 2011 the Club introduced a structured programme for junior golfers.
The Challenges and How they were Overcome:
The Club experienced two main challenges while running the Junior Golf Programme:

- Obtaining sufficient adult volunteers to supervise and assist with activities, particularly as the number of children increased.
- Persuading individuals to take responsibility for the organisation of the Junior Section. Tasks including running competitions, communicating with parents, and organising the supervision rota were all time-consuming and needed input from volunteers.

In 2015, the various roles and responsibilities have been distributed between the Junior Committee members. This has proved very successful and has resulted in a greater involvement in the Programme from across the membership, helping to resolve the earlier difficulties and challenges.

Enniscrone has enjoyed several unexpected spin-off benefits as a direct result of the Junior Golf Programme.

- Firstly, the Club has benefited from an increase in adult membership: in 2014 alone, eleven parents and guardians took out their own membership.
- Secondly, the Club has enjoyed increased revenue from spend by members and their parents in the Clubhouse and shop.
- Finally, the increased cooperation and interaction among the junior and adult members has been very welcome. The involvement of adult members in the Programme means that the knowledge and experience of the game is being passed down to the younger generation in a fun, interactive way, strengthening bonds within the Club in the process.

Overall, the Club’s spokeswoman reported that buzz of the Junior Golf Programme has brought renewed hope and morale during difficult financial times. The Club Council and other members have been very positive towards the Junior Golf Programme and supportive of it.

The Club credits the two lady members, current Lady Captain Ann Culkin and Maureen Leonard Dodd, who led the overhaul of the Junior Section for this huge success. The Junior Golf Programme now offers a fun environment in which to learn golf and this has been the overriding factor in attracting juniors to sign up.

Next Steps:
Enniscrone’s Junior Golf Programme is still still underway and is being continually assessed.

A new programme of activities was added in 2015. Aimed primarily at junior boys and girls who wish to compete in interclub competitions, it continues to maintain the Club’s ethos and belief in the inclusion of players of all ages and abilities.
Tips & Advice:
The Club approached this initiative with efficiency and detailed planning. It has enjoyed a very successful initiative as a result, and has the following advice for other clubs that are considering trying something similar:

★ Remember that pre-planning is the most important aspect of any junior golf programme.

★ Put Junior Policies & Procedures in place, and appoint a Children’s Safe Guarding Officer before the programme is set up.

★ Set up a Junior Golf Committee made up of individuals who truly believe in the potential of the programme.

★ Hold Club information events to ensure that all members know what to expect.

★ Establish good communication links with parents (the Club found texting to be the most effective method).

★ Advertise and spread the word.

★ Above all remember that children play sport for fun so make it enjoyable!

“A final word from Enniscrone Golf Club: Maureen Leonard Dodd, joint-initiator of the Club’s Junior Golf Programme and the current Appointed Children’s Safe Guarding Officer, is justifiably pleased with the Club’s achievement. “To date the experience has been positive. The Club has acknowledged the contributions made by the rejuvenation of the programme. Members have taken ownership of our well-organised Junior Golf Programme of activities, and appreciate the potential opportunities it has provided for future membership and the future of our Club.”

The involvement of our senior members has meant that knowledge & experience of the game is being ‘passed down’ in a fun interactive way.

Based on surveys and follow up interviews, the UK and Ireland’s Golf Home Unions have identified and showcased examples of “what works” in golf club management in a series of case studies. The focus has been on clubs that have been successful in achieving more players, more members and stronger clubs. The intention is to share information and guidance on effective practices in business planning, customer service, membership, and women’s and girls’ golf. For further information about this and other case studies and for further support, please go to www.golfcasestudies.businesscatalyst.com.